



The Will



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Illustrated by **Juhi Agarwal**

Original Story in Urdu '**Vaseeyat**' by Anis Azmi

Illustrations: Juhi Agarwal

'**The Will**' — English Translation from Hindi by Pragya Gopinath

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The Will

Written by **Anis Azmi**

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My Nani, like all other Nanis, used to tell me very interesting stories. Many wonderful tales from India, Arabia, Iran and Turan. Although many of her stories have escaped my memory, some of them are still fresh in my mind. I am reminded of one of these beautiful stories today, named *naseehat* which means 'advice'.

Many years ago in a small town in Egypt, there lived a man named Abdullah bin Saad. Abdullah worked with camels. He had the most pedigreed camels of the finest quality with fur as white as a rabbit's. Abdullah loved his camels like they were his own children. Once a year, he would sell them at the cattle fair and earn a good sum of money. Then he would rear the new and the remaining camels and increase his herd.

Abdullah had a good, honest wife and three sons who lived happily in his hut. The camel enclosure was right outside the hut. It was a sight to see many of his handsome white camels chewing their cud under the leafy date trees in the enclosure.

As time passed, Abdullah and his wife gradually grew weak and old.

One night at dinner time, Abdullah bin Saad said to his three sons, "My boys, I am getting old now and my body is getting weaker every day. I'm sick so often, I feel that soon my time will come. When I'm gone, look after your mother and please don't fight amongst yourselves. I don't have much, but I have written a will which you can find in a pot in the granary."

One morning soon after, Abdullah was found lifeless in his bed by his wife and sons. The third day after Abdullah's death, when his family could stop crying, they thought of his will. His sons searched every pot in the granary and finally found a paper wrapped in plastic. On opening the seal they found that it was not a will but a directive through which Abdullah bin Saad had addressed them.





"My children, I ask that the three of you look after your mother. Tell her about your decisions; if you travel anywhere, inform her before leaving. Ahmad, you are the eldest, so you will have the most responsibility. You will have to take care of your younger brothers, Muhammad and Mukarram. Ahmad, as the eldest, you must be present for any wedding, death or any other event in the house. Muhammad, since you are in the middle, you must respect your elder brother and indulge your younger one. You should also respect and love your mother. Mukarram, you are the youngest and the closest to your mother, so you must ensure that every need of your mother's is fulfilled either by you or by your brothers. You must respect your brothers because after me, they will be your elders."

The sons read the page from top to bottom and looked at each other, horrified that their father had left not a *vasiyat* or will, but a *naseehat* or advice, for them. Then, Rukaiya, Abdullah's wife said that she remembered that her husband had written on two sheets of paper that night, but they had read only one.

She told them to check if the second page was stuck to the first one. When Ahmad rubbed the corner of the paper, he found that there really was another paper stuck to the first one. The sons' faces lit up. Ahmad, the eldest said, "Thank God! Abba has written his will on this one!" Muhammad and Mukarram said, "Read it quickly, quickly!"

Ahmad began to read.

"With Allah as my witness, I write that after my death my house goes to my wife, Rukaiya Khatoon, and it is up to her to keep it, give it to our sons or sell it. The decision rests with my wife.

Apart from my house I have no other property. However, after my death, my camels will be distributed between my wife and children. The healthiest and most handsome camel will go to my wife. The remainder will be divided between my sons. Ahmad will get half of the remaining camels after my wife has taken one. Muhammad will get one-third of the camels and Mukarram will get one-ninth."





Abdullah bin Saad had eighteen camels when he died. The best camel would go to Rukaiya Khatoon. There remained seventeen beasts.

Ahmad demanded his half, but he could not have half of seventeen camels, that is eight-and-a-half camels. No one knew where to get half a camel from. Similarly, when Muhammad asked for one-third and Mukarram for one-ninth, it proved impossible to divide the camels. The three brothers began quarrelling, each wanting his entire share of the animals. None of them was willing to back down.

Their mother exclaimed that their father was hardly buried, and they were already enemies with each other.

Mukkaram, the youngest, saw that their fighting had made his mother sad. He thought of his father's words in his *naseehat*. "Ammi, you are wise. Why don't you tell us what we should do?" he said.

Remembering the *naseehat*, Muhammad decided to indulge his younger brother. "Yes, Ammi, what do you suggest?"

Ahmad realized too, that his father would want him to respect his mother's wish first. "Tell us Ammi, what is your wish?" he asked.

The mother thought for some time. Then she said, "Let me add my camel to your camels. So how many camels do you have now?"

"Eighteen," said the boys. Ammi said, "Absolutely correct. Ahmad you are the eldest, and according to the will you are given half the camels. You have nine of them. Muhammad, according to the will you get one third of the camels, so you have one third of eighteen, that is, six. And Mukarram, according to your father's will you are given one ninth of the camels. One ninth of eighteen is two camels."

Ammi said that the matter was now settled.

Ahmad said, "Yes Ammi. I get nine, Muhammad gets six and Mukarram gets two. My God! Together these come to seventeen camels, so your camel will stay with you!"

Ammi smiled. She said, "Your father was a just and honest man."



Pratham Books was set up in 2004, as part of the Read India movement, a nation-wide campaign to promote reading among children. Pratham Books is a not-for-profit organization that publishes quality books for children in multiple Indian languages. Our mission is to see "a book in every child's hand" and democratize the joy of reading. If you would like to contribute to our mission, please email us at info@prathambooks.org.



A Delhi-based theatre activist and playwright for over three decades, Anis Azmi has written thirty full-length plays for children which have been staged by various groups including the National School of Drama. Recipient of the prestigious Ghalib Award and many others, he has translated a number of books into Urdu for Pratham Books. His work has found place in many text books.



Juhi Agarwal is a budding artist who enjoys communicating through imagery. She graduated from Srishti School of Art, Design & Technology and loves to mix different media in her frames. Her final year project work on women's issues portrayed through collages of cloth, threads and embroidery led her to illustrate this book for Pratham Books. This is her first book as an illustrator. Juhi lives in Kolkata.

How can half of seventeen camels be given to someone? Here is a story that illustrates the wisdom of a father, Abdullah bin Saad, and the intelligence of a mother, Rukaiya Khatoon, who solves the puzzle and ensures harmony between her sons.

Learning to read – level by level. This is a Level 3 book.

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stories

1

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3



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